

"STATE OF THE COUNTY 2006"
BILL POSTMUS, Chairman
San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors
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Ontario, California

Thank you for that introduction. I would also like to thank Supervisor Ovitt for again hosting our State of the County Address in his district. We all know what a success story the City of Ontario has become. So I want to congratulate the City as well as Gary for the part he has played in making Ontario so successful. The progress and accomplishments we see in Ontario, and in the west end, are symbolic of the growing prominence of our entire region.

Just over one year ago, my colleagues gave me the honor of electing me as Chairman of the Board of Supervisors. As I told you last year, I see my role as Chairman as an opportunity to help each Supervisor meet the needs of the residents of his or her district. I also told you last year that it was my intent to make recommendations on ways I would like to perhaps do things differently than in the past. Today I will review that progress.

I would like to start by talking about where we are as a County. With our new leadership team, headed by Mark Uffer, our County Administrative Officer, we've made impressive progress away from the corruption of the past.

The County has now completed the trial court proceedings in the corruption cases that the Board directed against 24 firms and individuals. We have obtained settlements and judgments of over \$35 million dollars, of which approximately \$18 million has been collected to date. We have sent the message that "corruption does not pay in San Bernardino County." The Board of Supervisors has also passed several tough new ethics rules and anti-corruption policies.

I believe one of the best ways to prevent corruption is through transparent and open government.

Supervisor Ovitt and I recently proposed changes to make several types of county government information more easily accessible to the public.

The recommendations were approved by the Board and will soon make several types of information available on the Internet, including:

County campaign disclosure reports

Statements of economic interest

Facts about county contractors and vendors

Competitive proposal information – which was proposed by Supervisor Gonzales

And streaming audio or video of Board meetings – which was proposed by Supervisor Biane

We're creating an online searchable database of Board of Supervisors meeting agendas and Board actions. And we're also developing a hosted e-mail subscription service that will allow Internet users to receive free e-mail notifications of county website updates.

And the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors recently installed a public access computer specifically for the purpose of facilitating the public's access to board agenda information.

These actions are a major step toward achieving our goal of making San Bernardino County as open, accessible and transparent as possible.

We encourage all levels of local government to adopt similar measures.

Supervisor Ovitt and I also recently proposed reforms relating to disclosure statement filing deadlines, our expense reimbursement policy and surplus property sales.

First, in an effort to remove even the appearance of impropriety by county staff, the Board expanded the prohibition against purchasing county property to restrict *all* county employees, not just policy makers and executives.

The revision makes violation of this policy by exempt employees a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 or imprisonment in County jail for up to six months.

As we leave the days of corruption behind us, we're now at a point where we're building a reputation as a County on the cutting edge of innovation.

We're now able to recruit high-quality managers, and we've recently hired several top-notch leaders. In the effort to bring about change in county government, we have replaced 20 of the county's 37 top non-elected officials just within the last two years. We have dynamic new leadership in place that shares our commitment to efficient, honest, and open government.

One of those managers is our new Ethics Compliance Officer, who will begin working for us this coming Monday. This key advisor will assist the Board and CAO in the implementation of our ethics policies and training.

The most recent step taken by our CAO to improve our county has been the creation of a customer service program. The theme of the program is "Service First."

Our focus is on public service, including;

Ensuring all staff are aware of our Mission, Vision and Values

Identifying our expectations at New Employee Orientation

Teaching all County Departments about their role

And Holding Staff Accountable

All of these efforts are part of our plan to become a model county that cities and other counties can look to as an example of excellence.

Now, having said that, let's take a look at where we are as an institution and a region.

The state of our County is strong! And getting stronger.

Last year I told you about numerous challenges our county and others were facing, especially in relation to interference from Sacramento. But I predicted we would see one of the more promising budget years in recent history. That prediction has become a reality and we have seen tremendous revenue growth in our county.

Today, we're seeing the third year in a row of assessed valuations growing in double digits. Assessed property values increased from \$114.4 billion dollars to \$130.7 billion dollars from 2004-05 to 2005-06, an increase of over 14 percent. The average for the past three years has been over 11%.

A result of these increases in valuations is an increase in property tax revenues. In the housing sector alone, prices have increased 27.7% from \$292,000 to \$373,000 within the past year. In addition to the value of houses increasing, a lot of houses were built last year. 52% of all houses built in Southern California last year were built here in the Inland Empire.

Thanks to our economic growth, our budget is healthier than ever. Total budget appropriation is up \$250 million dollars over last year.

In order to maintain a fiscally sound budget, our board adheres to three financing policies:

We avoid spending one-time funds to finance ongoing operational costs

We set aside ongoing and one-time money for emergencies, and

We ensure prudent management of liabilities by minimizing the level of debt.

Our board is doing a great job of sticking to those policies, and the results can be seen in the growth of our budget reserves. When compared to other California counties, only Santa Barbara has healthier budget reserves.

The County, with the Board's commitment to strong fiscal management, will continue to provide top-notch public services to our citizens.

We on the Board of Supervisors oversee a budget of \$3 billion dollars annually.

Our organization is large, complex and dynamic. Our 18,000 employees provide vital services to the almost 2 million people who live here in the largest County in the contiguous United States.

It's easy to be overwhelmed by the range of services we provide. For example:

We prevent and fight fires, and we operate libraries, museums and parks.

We capture, prosecute and incarcerate criminals.

We provide medical care, conduct elections, protect consumers, manage growth and protect the public's health by regulating everything from ground water to restaurants to ambulances.

We build, maintain and repair roads and flood control channels, and we protect children and senior citizens from abuse.

We also protect and preserve our environment, while respecting private property rights and defending our citizens' rights to access public lands.

And we help people find jobs, help train them and help employers find places to do business.

Last year I told you about my plan to jumpstart our County's economic development efforts. I'll get to that later, but let me say from the start that one of the reasons that effort is so important to me is because I see it as the surest way to capture revenues we need to fulfill our most sacred trust -- that of Public Safety.

Because public safety is, and must continue to be, our highest priority, I would like to take a few minutes to talk about our recent efforts to protect the public and to discuss the accomplishments of several of our County departments.

We're almost done with the process of restructuring the financial organization of our County Fire Department. When complete, this new structure will help to ensure future solvency and to maximize service levels.

Our firefighters, who protect us from fires and other disasters, have saved countless lives at the risk of their own.

Last year I told this gathering that we owe it to our County Firefighters to give them more resources to continue to do what we ask of them. And we've done so.

During the past year, the Board of Supervisors increased the budget for the County Fire Department by \$44 million dollars, including \$29 million dollars to clear bark beetle infested trees.

In October, the Board allocated \$4.6 million dollars to the County Fire Department for special projects, including construction and renovation of fire stations, a new Rescue Squad in Mt. Baldy, and equipment for fire stations in the communities of Devore and Lytle Creek. In addition, funds were provided for an expansion of the Emergency Operations Center in Rialto and to provide disaster preparedness assistance in the desert and mountain regions.

In December, the Board allocated \$3.5 million dollars to fund the addition of 23 new firefighters at stations in vital locations, including Mentone, Fawnskin, Oak Hills, Phelan, Harvard, Baker, and Needles.

In addition, the Board allocated \$2.7 million dollars in one-time funds for site acquisition and design of two new stations in Phelan and Spring Valley Lake, plus health and safety upgrades and emergency preparedness enhancements at sixteen fire stations.

A new heavy-rescue vehicle and a swift-water rescue vehicle were also funded in this appropriation.

A new fire station in Muscoy was opened in December, and two fire stations are being planned in conjunction with the City of Fontana; including one new station in the Hunter's Ridge area west of Interstate 15, and a replacement station downtown. A new fire station, located in the Speedway Redevelopment Area, is in the final design phase.

Another area of public safety where we've made great progress is in our ability to protect our citizens from crime. Our District Attorney, Mike Ramos, and our Sheriff, Gary Penrod, continue to show proactive leadership in protecting our citizens from criminals.

A major public safety success last year was the Board of Supervisors' approval of 37 new patrol deputy positions for Sheriff's stations in unincorporated areas. This was the largest increase in the number of deputies in the unincorporated areas in more than 12 years.

In December, the Board of Supervisors funded a new Identity Theft Prosecution Unit for the District Attorney's office. The Inland Empire ranks second in the nation in instances of identity theft. With that in mind, we worked with our District Attorney to develop a new unit composed of highly skilled investigators, competent in high-tech criminal investigations.

In May of last year, our County declared War on Gangs. The Board approved a plan to allocate more than \$4.6 million dollars in an effort to combat gangs in the county. The board authorized the creation of a 48-member Gang Task Force composed of staff from the Sheriff, District Attorney and Probation offices that are leading the fight against the county's growing gang population.

Winning the war on gangs is a top priority for our District Attorney and Sheriff. About 60 percent of all homicides in the county are gang related. These gang members prey on our citizens and foster fear and intimidation throughout our county.

As our District Attorney says, they are “Domestic Terrorists.”

Current estimates place the number of gang members in the county at up to 16,000 members belonging to 287 different gangs. It is an important mission of our law enforcement agencies to come down hard on gang crime and keep our communities safe.

As part of the plan, the Sheriff formed two gang units last year, one that covers the High Desert and one in the Valley Region. The units have been tasked with eradicating gang members and have so far made more than 1300 arrests in 16 major sweeps. Our message to gang members is simple, but clear: “Reform, get out of our county, or you will go to jail.”

Our District Attorney has been diligent in pursuing jail time for those suspects arrested by our Sheriff. During the six months from July 1, 2005 through December 31, 2005 the DA:

Filed 489 cases against gang members,

Won 182 state prison commitments for a total of 950 years of state prison, including one life term,

And secured 53 gang enhancements.

With all of those arrests and convictions, and with the population growth in our county, our jail population is increasing. Even though our county ranks fourth in population in the state, our jail system is the second largest in the state.

We created a program last year to help us deal with some of that overcrowding. In August the Board approved the creation of an Illegal Alien Identification Unit to identify criminal illegal aliens in the jail system and refer those criminals for deportation after they have served their sentences. The program is also helping to ensure that we receive all of the federal reimbursement that we are entitled to for housing these immigration offenders.

In a further effort to alleviate jail overcrowding in our County and to reduce the need for early release of certain inmates due to lack of space, the Board of Supervisors approved the purchase of a privately-owned jail in Adelanto. The jail opened this January and was full to capacity in less than thirty days. It now houses an additional 700 inmates.

The jail was a great bargain for the county, too. The total cost was just over \$31 million dollars. That comes out to about \$44,000 dollars per bed, which compares favorably to the current price of about \$130,000 dollars per bed for new jail construction.

The addition of this facility has reduced the need for deputies to transport suspects to the West Valley Detention Center, giving them more time to patrol our streets – and we've made it easier to transport inmates back and forth to High Desert courts. The jail also brought 131 full-time jobs to the high desert.

However, our ultimate solution is the construction of a new jail in North Apple Valley. That facility would be more than four times the size of the Adelanto Jail and would give us the additional room necessary to deal with our growing jail population into the future.

Another area where we've have made great improvements in the past year is monitoring sex offenders. In July, the Probation Department formed a Sex Offender Supervision Unit. Five senior probation officers and one supervisor monitor 525 felons convicted of sex crimes. All of these offenders live in the community and have been convicted of serious crimes.

Probation officers use methods such as frequent home calls, lie-detector testing, forensic searches of computers, surveillance and our new Global Positioning Satellite tracking program to closely monitor the activities of these individuals.

In May, the Board of Supervisors directed the Probation Department to begin utilizing the GPS tracking system to monitor sex offenders. In so doing, we became the first county in the state to implement satellite tracking of sex offenders.

Probation Officers are working closely with other law enforcement agencies to ensure that these probationers have registered their addresses with the police department where they live. The Probation Department has a zero-tolerance policy for any type of probation or law violation committed by these individuals. This has resulted in the arrest of 133 of these individuals for probation violations. Of these arrests, 108 individuals have been sentenced to either state prison or county jail for a total of 176 years of custody time.

The last law enforcement project I'll tell you about today is the new Law Enforcement Aviation Facility, which will be opening next month at the Apple Valley Airport. The new facility will house both Sheriff and CHP aviation units who cover the high desert region.

Speaking of public safety, there are two more major areas of concern, and they are flooding and tree mortality. Last year I spoke to you about some of the disasters we were dealing with in relation to those two types of hazards. I am happy to say that since my State of the County address last year, we have fared much better in relation to flood control. Our Public Works department has been doing a great job of keeping us safe by keeping our flood control facilities in order.

And we have continued to make great progress in dealing with our tree mortality crisis. Last year I spoke about the cooperative efforts of the County, the US Forest Service, the National Resource Conservation Service, the California Department of Forestry, community Fire Safe Councils, individual mountain residents and the private sector. Their

combined efforts to reduce the threat to our urbanized forest communities have been commendable.

Last year, I told you that the County had removed about 58,000 trees so far. Thanks to substantial financial assistance provided by Congressman Jerry Lewis, that number is now up to about 180,000 trees. When combined with the number of trees removed by our partners, a total of about 600,000 dead trees have been removed from the mountain since the crisis began. Our engineers anticipate that when all is said and done, about 1 million trees will have been removed. This critical work will continue at an accelerated pace through this year and next.

As our cooperative efforts are overcoming the challenges of the past, this will be a time of transition as we move from active hazard reduction to establishing a sustainable, healthy, living forest... A forest that is less susceptible to catastrophic fire and a forest that provides a much better place to live, work and play.

Although we haven't had any great disasters in our county over the past year, we did have an occasion to mobilize our forces to assist some neighbors. Those neighbors were not right next-door, but on the Gulf Coast.

Last August, the Gulf Coast was hit by one of the deadliest hurricanes in American history. It was the sixth-strongest Atlantic Hurricane ever recorded, but it inflicted some of the worst damage ever seen in several states along the Gulf Coast.

Government agencies, relief organizations and regular folks throughout the United States mobilized to come to the aid of our countrymen on the Gulf Coast, but it wasn't enough. Seeing that the need was greater than the assistance available, the County of San Bernardino stepped in to lend its resources and expertise. I am incredibly proud of the efforts put forth by our entire county family in this endeavor.

Teams of doctors, nurses, respiratory therapists, pharmacists and other health-care professionals from Arrowhead Regional Medical Center went the Gulf Coast to care for the wounded. ARMC Medical Director Dr. Dev Gnanadev was one of ten physicians, four behavioral health professionals, and two radiology technicians who spent four 10- to-16-hour days treating patients in a makeshift clinic established at a sports arena in Houston.

Our county adopted the city of Gulfport Mississippi and our employees organized a heroic effort to come to their aid. Hurricane Katrina killed at least 130 of Gulfport's approximately 80,000 residents and left 6,500 homes uninhabitable.

County employees pitched in their own hard-earned money and donated over \$40,000 dollars to the citizens of Gulfport.

Our County found out what was needed in Gulfport and gathered donated supplies and equipment from not only County supplies, but also from several local companies and cities; including Ontario, Chino Hills, Chino, Upland, Rancho Cucamonga, San

Bernardino, Barstow, Victorville and Big Bear Lake. The items – which filled four tractor-trailer rigs and a flatbed truck – included brand-new generators and power tools as well as surplus office furniture, computers, and photocopiers. County firefighters led the relief party and trucked the supplies to Gulfport.

I would also like to thank the person who made the initial contact with the Mayor of Gulfport, and that is Ontario Mayor Paul Leon who is hosting us in his city today. Paul, on behalf of the county and the cities, I would like to thank you for your leadership in the Katrina Relief effort. Let's give him round of applause.

Our county has once again proven that when faced with a challenge, our county can rise to the challenge and accomplish great things.

As someone who represents the largest County supervisorial district in the United States, I talk a lot about how big our County is. Our 20,000 square miles makes us the largest County in the contiguous states. We're also the fourth largest County in terms of population in the most populous state, and the 11th most populous in the nation, with almost 2 million residents now.

According to official population estimates released last month by the State Department of Finance, California's population topped 37 million last year.

The U.S. Census Bureau released numbers last month showing that San Bernardino County ranked as the 5th fastest growing county in the nation in terms of numerical population increase over the last year.

Our county added over 50,000 people from July 2004 to July 2005 and our County's population is expected to increase by 24% from 2000 to 2010 and almost 43% from 2000 to 2020.

Together with Riverside County, we comprise a region so significant that if it were a state it would be larger than 20 other states in population (about the size of Oregon). As a state, our region's growth over the next 20 years would make us the fourth fastest-growing state in the nation – behind only Florida, Texas and California.

By the year 2020, the Inland Empire's population will be more than five million. As everyone in this room is acutely aware, San Bernardino County and the Inland Empire are in the midst of one of the fastest population and economic expansions in America.

In response to all of this growth, the County is working hard to improve and expand County facilities both within our Cities and our unincorporated areas.

We're working, in conjunction with the General Plan and Development Code Update, to ensure responsible growth policies, and we're working with our cities and neighboring counties to improve our transportation system and relieve traffic congestion.

Our general plan will be our framework for growth and should be adopted by the end of this year.

One of the biggest challenges we have is maintaining and expanding our transportation system. In a perfect world, our state government would take care of these needs for us. But as we all know, Sacramento is not perfect. Therefore, we are left to find ways to fund much of our regional transportation system on our own.

Fortunately County voters renewed the Measure I half-cent sales tax for transportation, but that simply won't be enough money to pay for the needs we have *today*, let alone tomorrow.

We should be in a very favorable position though when it comes to securing federal dollars. We have an amazing congressional delegation here in San Bernardino County and that puts us in a good position to be able to get federal assistance with transportation.

We are fortunate to have three Inland Empire Congressmen who serve as Committee Chairs. Congressman Buck McKeon is serving as Chairman of the Education and Workforce Committee. Congressman David Dreier is serving as Chairman of the Rules Committee. And Congressman Jerry Lewis is serving as Chairman of the Appropriations Committee.

One especially important transportation project is the 210 freeway, which I am happy to report should be done in the next year.

Several County departments are responsible for building and maintaining public facilities, and many have ambitious plans in the coming year, as new growth brings us more challenges and opportunities to expand our infrastructure.

These Departments include:

The County Museum, the Regional Parks Department, the Libraries, and the Special Districts Department.

The San Bernardino County Museum's future Hall of Geological Wonders will be a unique and exciting showcase for the geological and prehistoric wonders of the region. Dynamic exhibits will engage visitors in understanding the ancient environments in southern California.

The Regional Parks Department has acquired approximately 30 acres so far for the new Colton Regional Park. Regional Parks has partnered with the City of Colton and the Wildlands Conservancy in an effort to bring the first regional park to the Fifth Supervisorial District.

At Calico Ghost Town, renovations were completed on several buildings last year and what's even more exciting, Governor Schwarzenegger signed legislation officially designating Calico Ghost Town as the official Silver Rush Town for the State of California.

Other regional park improvements include new playgrounds and water play areas at Mojave Narrows and Guasti, and new boat ramps at Moabi Regional Park on the Colorado River. Moabi, by the way, continues to be our most attended and highest grossing of all of our regional parks.

The County's Libraries are another place where we're seeing several exciting developments, including:

New libraries in Hesperia, Chino, Chino Hills, Crestline, Highland, Grand Terrace, Loma Linda, Mentone and two in Fontana.

And since last year's address, we've opened new libraries in Rialto and Wrightwood.

The library has also expanded its electronic capabilities by offering e-books to patrons for use on their MP3 players. Downloadable audio-books have become very popular; about 3,500 e-books were downloaded last year.

When I talk about what our county has to offer, it's well known that affordable homes have been the primary attraction of our County. That continues to be the case in much of our county.

To help streamline new development, we have implemented several reforms:

In July, a one-stop Land Use Services office was opened in Victorville. The new facility houses staff from Planning, Building and Safety, Code Enforcement, the Public Works' Land Development Division and County Fire. Having all of these departments in one location allows us to better serve the public in the rapidly growing High Desert area. The new office is staffed with additional employees to shorten wait times and provide improved customer service to those directly involved in our county's growth and development.

In 2005, the Building and Safety Division recorded a 9% increase in applications from the previous year. There were 29,278 building permit applications submitted last year with a construction valuation of \$1.24 billion dollars.

Last year I told you that our Auditor/ Controller- Recorder, Larry Walker, had implemented eRecording, allowing outside entities, such as title companies and mortgage lenders, to electronically submit documents to the Recorder's office.

Well that program has been extremely successful. The number of documents being recorded electronically has gone up 28% and about one third of all recordings are now being done electronically. That makes us more efficient and that makes our local businesses more efficient.

Our Treasurer-Tax Collector, Dick Larsen, continues to see a phenomenal upward trend in tax bills:

Since fiscal year 2002/03, the dollar amount of property taxes billed has increased from \$1.187 billion to \$1.635 billion. That's an increase of 38% or \$448 million in ongoing revenue over the last 3 years.

The number of parcels billed has increased from 747,122 to 773,552 over this same time frame. That's a permanent addition of 26,473 parcels.

Supplemental bills have been increasing at staggering rates as well. From fiscal year 2002/03 to fiscal year 2005/06 supplemental bills will see an increase of 263% with an increase in billed taxes of \$142 million dollars.

As we know, the tax revenue we receive is what makes it possible for us to provide the services we do. Without that revenue, we can't make changes or provide vital services.

With that in mind, Supervisor Ovitt and I recently drafted a plan to help some San Bernardino County cities deal with the growth they are experiencing and the need for increased public services for their growing populations. The proposal created Revenue Enhancement Zones within incorporated cities that currently receive a lower share of property tax revenues than other cities.

The cities in our county are experiencing tremendous growth and development. In order to cope with that growth, our cities need as many resources as possible available to them for building infrastructure and providing for public safety and other vital services. As we all know, building infrastructure and providing services requires tax revenue.

With the approval of this new policy, cities which currently receive less than a seven percent share on property taxes will be able to increase their percentage up to that seven percent within designated zones.

This is just one example of how we've been working more closely with our cities in an effort to help them provide the services that are vital to our citizens. I firmly believe that the best way for us to address the issues facing our region is through a cooperative effort with our cities.

One of the first changes I made as Chairman was to allow for the Board of Supervisors to hold its meetings, on occasion, outside of the County seat in San Bernardino. I felt this was important because it sends the message to our 24 cities that your County government is accessible. It says we want to be a partner with you in serving your residents. We held our first off-site meeting on December 13 in Victorville and we recently held our second off-site meeting in Chino on February 28.

As I said, one of the challenges the cities and the county have been facing is growth. We've been working to take advantage of our growth to help develop our employment base.

Our robust job market is one attraction that's bringing new residents into our county. While the most recent numbers from the employment development department show that California has a commendable unemployment rate of only 4.9%, San Bernardino County's rate is better than that statewide average at 4.7%.

More than 56,000 new jobs were created last year in the Inland Empire. That was the second best recorded job growth in the history of the region. 22% of all jobs created in California last year were created here in the Inland Empire. To put it in perspective, the combined job growth in the regions with the second and third highest growth, Orange and San Diego Counties combined still had less job growth than we had here in the Inland Empire.

Needless to say, just about everybody who wants to work has the opportunity to do so. But that does not mean we can sit back and relax. We must continue to attract more better-paying jobs; not only to keep up with population growth, but to allow our residents to work close to home and not have to commute far from their homes.

As I told you last year, one of my primary goals was to improve our economic development capabilities. We have been following the advice of Dr. John Husing, the preeminent economist specializing in our region, and we are in the final stages of implementing his recommendations.

Perhaps the most critical aspect of our plan has been hiring key managers to lead the effort. I am happy to announce today that we have found two superb candidates that I am confident will bring to pass the vision our Board has for economic development in our county.

The first person, who is our new Economic Development Administrator, is someone who has been responsible for some of the economic development you see around you here in Ontario. He had a lot to do with the great success here in the west-end and that is because we were able to steal him from the City of Ontario. His name is Brian McGowan. He worked as their Economic Development Manager for the past six years and we are proud to say that he has been a *County* employee for one week now.

The other key leader is the new head of our Redevelopment Agency, Kathleen Thomas. She also became a county employee last week after she served Riverside County for the past six years as the economic development Strategic Planning Manager. But she too had a hand in Ontario's success. She got her start in redevelopment with the Ontario Redevelopment Agency just over ten years ago.

So I would say to Mayor Leon and City Manager Devereaux, imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, and we're following in Ontario's footsteps.

Of course, our existing local businesses have always been one of our priorities, I believe our Economic Development staff have done a commendable job in helping them to grow their businesses and become more successful:

Our Business Resources Specialists have really stepped up the effort in providing personalized assistance and services to our local businesses.

They assisted 3,100 businesses last year. That was up 15% from the previous year.

2,652 businesses were assisted with filling their hiring needs.

Business Resource Centers in the High Desert and in the West Valley hosted 38 workshops and business meetings.

Countywide, the Department presented 138 job fairs and employer specific recruitments.

31 businesses received business retention services, helping save nearly 700 jobs in the County.

Local businesses used the Department's web-based job-match system to post over 23,000 job openings in calendar year 2005.

And they were involved in 34 business attraction meetings where they showcased San Bernardino County to prospective companies that were considering opening for business in our county.

Now having said all of that, although we've made great progress in growing our economic development effort, I think we can still do better.

I believe our County's businesses, and our efforts to help them, have been successful, but we must expand our efforts to bring new business into our county.

When businesses want to come here to our county, they have too often not had a solid point of contact to give them information on what properties are available, the advantage of different locations or how to efficiently move through the County's regulatory process. That will no longer be the case in our county.

We are not going to compete with our cities in this effort; we must work in partnership with them to bring those businesses in. Frankly, it doesn't really matter to me if the jobs are located in a city or in unincorporated areas; the important thing is that we bring jobs into our county.

Our reorganized and better-funded economic development program will help us maintain and improve an environment that's open for business.

Our new Economic Development Agency will take the necessary actions to take full advantage of the opportunities available to us.

One of those opportunities is filming. I know some of you have heard me refer to my district in the High Desert as Hollywood's Back-lot. Well the reason it's called that is because there were 247 film projects in the Inland Empire last year, many of them in the desert. The most recent figures we have from our film commission is that that equates to about \$170 million dollars being infused into our county's economy from filming; and that equates to more jobs.

Today I've talked about some of the ways our County is taking advantage of our explosive growth to help improve the quality of life for our residents. Our superior quality of life is attracting the kind of economic development that will transform our region into an even better place to live and work. Now we just need to sustain our efforts.

We need to continue to be creative in our approach to the challenges of growth. And we need to work cooperatively among our local, state and federal agencies and community organizations. If we do that, the state of our County will get even stronger.

I look forward to fulfilling my second year as Chairman of the Board. Let's keep striving to make San Bernardino County one of the best places to live and work.

Thank you for attending today.